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## *The Blessings and Burdens of Revival*



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Readers of this journal, presumably, are united in their desire to seek revival for the church in our generation. Or, at the very least, to lay a foundation of preparation for revival so that, if it please the Lord, he might once again pour out his renewing grace on his Body in a generation to come. We seek revival because we understand that this is what God wants. The Lord is not pleased to see his Bride languishing in schism, controversy, strife, worldliness, complacency, marginality, and a lack of power. His desire is that his church should be vibrant and filled with love, the joy of the whole earth, grounded in and proclaiming his truth to the nations, such that they stream up to her eager to learn his ways, and to be forged together by the Spirit of God into one new Body, a glorious dwelling-place of God (Psalm 48:1-3; Micah 4:1-5; Ephesians 2:11-22). God earnestly desires that his people might be revived, and because of this, we seek revival daily, pleading with God to shower us anew with his mercy and might.

We seek revival because we know that a revived church is a *blessed* church, a community of people abounding in the grace and truth of God who experience life as a kingdom calling in the light of the risen Son of God. Where revival flourishes the blessings of God attend to his people, filling them with purpose, power, and joy unutterable, and moving them

to works of love and truth on behalf of their neighbors. A revived and blessed church experiences greater richness in worship, generosity in giving, readiness for ministry, and harmony of life together. We seek these blessings, and the Lord Jesus Christ dearly desires for us to know them; for this reason we seek revival tirelessly, devoting ourselves in prayer and preparation for those blessings that God intends for his chosen and redeemed people.

But as the first Christians learned, revival can be something of a mixed bag. For the moving of the Spirit in the ways of renewal brings not only blessings, but *burdens* as well—burdens which, if they are not properly anticipated and addressed, can turn the blessing of revival into a bane. For, while revival springs from the pleasure and power of God's Spirit, it necessarily comes to expression in people, and people, even though they be revived, are perpetually susceptible to sin, their own, or the sins of others. Where the presence of God's Spirit is working mightily to revive his people, there those same people must expect that the burdens of sin will be heightened among them and in particular ways. Only as we prepare ourselves and the people in our care to recognize and bear the burdens of revival will we ensure that the work of God's Spirit will continue to flourish, and his initial downpours of heavenly manna not turn sour in our stomachs.

In the remarks that follow I want to examine the experience of the first Christian churches, primarily those in Jerusalem and Antioch where the reviving grace of God first made itself manifest. We will consider in brief the blessings they came to know as a result of the outpouring of God's Spirit. But our principal focus will be on the burdens which accompanied those blessings because of the sins of men. We want to identify those burdens and observe the steps taken by church leaders to bear them before the Lord so that the work of revival might not be short-circuited but continue to flourish and expand, as, indeed, it did, for nearly 300 years. I will argue that, unless church leaders, who eagerly seek revival from the Lord, set their hearts and minds to anticipate and address these burdens, then the blessings of revival will turn

to bane, and the Spirit of God will withhold further renewal until those burdens are resolved.

### THE BLESSINGS OF REVIVAL

From the experience of the first churches in Jerusalem, Antioch, and elsewhere we may observe four specific types of blessing, each of which is but an expression of the coming of the Lord among his people, to constitute them as his own flock, and to bless and use them for his glory. These blessings are: the lively presence of God's Spirit, an increased presence of God's Kingdom, the progress of God's gospel, and the maturing of God's church. We will look briefly at each of these in turn.

*The lively presence of God's Spirit.* As Peter was emphatic to point out, the stir and wonder which began in Jerusalem and spread to Antioch and beyond was the result of the outpouring of the Spirit of God into the hearts of his people (Acts 2:14-33). No amount of mere human resolve, ingenuity, or effort could have accounted for the dramatic events of the Book of Acts. The Spirit who hovered over the creation and brought life and diversity to light, the Spirit who inspired the prophets, was the same Spirit the exalted Jesus Christ had promised and was now pouring out in abundance. He came to take up residence in the hearts of God's chosen people. He brought new power to understand the ancient prophecies, bring hardened hearts to repentance, open the mouths of men and women to confess faith in Jesus Christ, forge them into one new Body, and impel them to exuberant witness in the streets of Jerusalem and Antioch. Doubtless the people themselves were amazed suddenly to be penetrating the mysteries of divine revelation, and to find themselves excited and outspoken as never before about the things of the Lord. In the presence of the Spirit they melded into a community of mutual sacrifice and care. Their priorities changed, their interests were revolutionized, and their lives were never to be the same.

We can only speculate on what a fresh outpouring and upwelling of God's Spirit might effect in the church of our Lord Jesus Christ today, but it will surely bear similar marks to

what we see in Luke's astonishing account. After two generations of trying to program such effects into being, the church today appears weary with the effort and complacent about the prospect. Numerical growth has entered into a period of stasis, or even decline. Church leaders continue to shine the tarnish-prone idol of innovation, even while others attack it ferociously. Defectors to the ways of the world are visible in every rank among the people of God. Compromise with the ways and aspirations of the material society around us are evident on every hand. When finally, weary, discouraged, and disillusioned, we realize that our own efforts will not achieve the blessings we seek, we may turn again to plead with the Lord to cause his face to shine upon us and his Spirit to visit us with the power to make all things new (Psalm 80:1-3; cf. Ezekiel 39:29). When we do, with a sincerity and perseverance that God will recognize as true repentance, then we may expect the lively and transforming Spirit of God to visit us in power again.

*An increased presence of God's kingdom.* With the coming of the Spirit the evidence of his rule began to flourish and fan out from the people of God. Such zeal did the redeemed show for the things of the Lord that they gathered faithfully and often, in large groups and small, to listen to the teaching of God's appointed ministers. They devoted themselves to frequent seasons of prayer and worship. The store of good works became suddenly replenished to overflowing, as people happily renounced their own possessions in order to meet the needs of others. They gathered in one another's homes, a community of the Spirit, a new people with a new mission, new love for one another, new eagerness to proclaim the things of the Lord, and a new sense of standing together and encouraging one another in uncertain times (Acts 2:42-47; 4:3-35). What could explain this but that they had come under a new power and authority which, as a lively presence in their midst, wrought upon their hearts, minds, and lives in ways distinctly uncharacteristic of anything the world had seen before. The righteousness, peace, and joy of the kingdom of God were everywhere in evidence as the Spirit of God

brought revival to the hearts of his people (Romans 14:17).

Surely we long for such to be the case in our churches. What we would not give for God's power to break out in our midst, enabling people to set aside their petty disputes, overcome the temptations of materialism, deepen their commitment to and experience of worship, thrill them with every opportunity to hear the preaching of God's word, and enliven them toward one another and their neighbors in tender and generous ways. As polls and studies continue to show, the church today is in danger of losing her distinctiveness. In our morality, avocations, and way of life, for all intents and purposes we look pretty much like the world around us. The presence of the Kingdom of God—of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit—is scarcely in evidence among us. Only the reviving power of God's Spirit can renew us in that blessing.

*The progress of the gospel.* In the churches of Jerusalem and Antioch it seemed that all people could talk about was the wonderful grace of Jesus Christ. So often was that glorious name on their lips that their neighbors adopted it as a way of identifying them. They called them "Christ-ones" (Acts 11:26). Wherever they went they gladly spoke the word about his forgiving and redeeming grace, and people responded in droves, by the thousands (Acts 8:4; 2:47; 4:31; 6:7; etc.). Soon the despised Samaritans were evangelized, then the Gentiles, to the great astonishment of all (Acts 8:4-7; 10:34-45). Churches began to appear in cities and towns all over the Levant, then into Gentile Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, Italy, and beyond. Nothing could stop this force which was literally turning the ancient pagan world upside-down for Jesus (Acts 17:6). Religious authorities were left speechless; philosophers were stunned; civil magistrates were helpless to stem the tide; ordinary people were swept up in the reviving power of the gospel, adding the fuel of their own hearts and mouths to that ever-spreading flame. The gospel advanced like a growing stone, overturning and subduing peoples, cities, and an entire empire by the irresistible power of grace (Daniel 2:44, 45).

Today, when the "go/tell" mission of the church has been exchanged for a program of "come/see," we think such

spontaneous expansion of the gospel an unlikely prospect. The guilty silence of God's people concerning the good news of Jesus Christ continues as surely today as when John Stott first rebuked us for it over thirty years ago. But oh, how church leaders would love to see themselves and their people on fire with evangelistic zeal once again! This is a work of the Spirit of God, and not the fruit of sophisticated, detailed programs of instruction, motivated by guilt. So we seek revival, for we eagerly desire this great blessing as well.

*The maturing of God's church.* When the first Christians thought about "church growth" they did not reflect on the kinds of external criteria that animate specialists on this subject today—innovation in worship, improved parking, more and better programs, changes in church architecture, marketing the church, location, location, location. Their minds were set not on attracting their lost neighbors in non-threatening, comfortable ways; rather, they labored for their churches to achieve the kind of unity and maturity that would make them the very living presence of Christ in their communities. For the first Christians, a healthy growing church was one that only God could achieve (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 2:19-22). He was pleased to do so by endowing his churches with faithful preachers and teachers, shepherds of the flock of God, who, by their example and instruction, would equip the people of God to live and proclaim the grace of Jesus in loving service to one another and to their neighbors (Ephesians 4:11, 12; 1 Peter 5:1-3; Titus 2:1-15). Local churches matured as they submitted to the ministry of God's word, reached out with the love of Christ to others, realized greater unity in the faith and in the knowledge of Jesus, and became more discerning, loving, and serving communities, characterized over all by increased love for God and others (Ephesians 4:13-16). Certainly it was the case that large numbers of people were drawn to such mature congregations, and that in spite of their many problems; but these increases in numbers were a by-product of a living reality, a maturing community characterized by faithfulness in worship and sacrificial service in love.

The hope that we might once again realize such blessings

as these drives all who earnestly seek the reviving grace of God. We eagerly desire these blessings because they are what we have been created for, what gives meaning, purpose, and joy to our lives. They are what God himself desires for us. Yet he has determined that we shall only have them as we trust in him, and in the renewing power of his Spirit, and cry out to him in repentance and sincere longing to know his holy, living presence in our midst once again. We believe that we shall know these blessings, for we believe God desires to revive his church, and we long for that which God desires. So we devote ourselves tirelessly to prayer, seeking the reviving grace of God.

But we must prepare ourselves for the season of refreshing that is sure to come, and recognize that, with the blessings will come certain burdens, which, if we do not make ourselves ready to bear them, can turn the blessings of revival into a bane.

#### THE BURDENS OF REVIVAL

When once the reviving breezes of God's Spirit begin to rise among us once again, let us be careful to rejoice in the Lord and to credit with thanksgiving his marvelous, unending mercy and grace. But let us also look for the storm clouds that will surely begin to gather on the horizon, portending potentially damaging weather for the newly refreshed churches of the Lord. For the same breezes that stir the church to revival catch up alien properties and tendencies which would flood the community of faith with burdens capable of washing away all the gains of revival and returning the church to its sorry *status quo ante* (Revelation 12:15). From the experience of those first revived churches we may observe six particular burdens which church leaders must be prepared to address if revival and the blessings it carries are to be sustained. These are the emergence of detractors and discouragers, the presence of revival profiteers, the tendency toward a centripetal church, disruption of the status quo, the need for renewed vision, and theological error. Church leaders may expect each of these burdens, and doubtless others as well, to raise their heads in

our midst as soon as the winds of revival begin to fill the sails of God's church, and they must be prepared to deal with them efficiently.

*The emergence of detractors and discouragers.* No sooner did the Spirit of God fall upon those first believers than this first burden of revival made its presence known. Even before Peter could preach that first glorious word of the gospel, people in the streets sought to discount the evidence of revival by attributing what they saw to purely natural causes: "These people are drunk" (Acts 2:12). As the revival began to spread through the streets of Jerusalem local religious authorities convened to plot more aggressive efforts to stifle the movement, threatening church leaders with unspecified punishments should they continue to preach Jesus to the people (Acts 4:17-21). This failing, they took even sterner measures, imprisoning and murdering church leaders, and unleashing violent persecution against their followers (Acts 5:17-41; 7:54-56; 8:1-4; 12:1-5). In each case the leadership of the church showed exemplary conviction, courage, and clarity in responding to this burden.

Their responses were of three types. First, they preached and testified with persuasion and power against those who sought to discourage the revival or distract the people of God from his mighty work (Acts 2:14 ff; 4:5-19; 5:27-32; 7:1-53; etc.). Both to the revived church and face-to-face with the detractors and discouragers, the apostles stood boldly and uncompromisingly for the work of the Spirit and the proclamation of the gospel. Their enemies were left without compelling arguments in response, and with the threat of violence as their only recourse. But the power of the Word of God, sown in the hearts of his people, was a living and active force sufficient to sustain the believing community against such threats and to accomplish the purposes for which God had sent it forth through his appointed leaders (Hebrews 4:12; Isaiah 55:11). The disinformation and threats of the enemies of God were no match for the power of his Spirit working with his word.

Second, they turned often to prayer, especially in leading

the people of God in large groups and small to keep their focus on his promises and look to him for wisdom and strength (Acts 4:23-30; 12:12-17). They had seen the Lord answer their prayers in that upper room by pouring out his Spirit with great power, and they had no doubt that he would respond to their prayers for wisdom and strength as they faced up to those who sought to derail the reviving work of God. For the apostles and the members of their congregations, prayer was no perfunctory practice or ritual of convenience; it was the lifeblood of their conviction and the fountainhead of the faith.

Third, they maintained an example of faithfulness and courage before the people of God, stiffening their resolve before those who threatened them, rejoicing in their sufferings, and seeking the grace of the Lord for their persecutors (Acts 4:19, 20; 5:41; 7:60). We find in the leaders of that first revived community no whining or complaining about their plight, no ducking of threatened measures. They had, after all, been told to expect it (John 15:18-27), and they received opposition and threats as proof that they were, indeed, being faithful in their service to the Lord. Thus convinced, they kept from faltering and upped the ante each time they were subjected to efforts to bring the work of God to an end. Theirs was an example of faithfulness, conviction, boldness, and rejoicing which no amount of suffering could squelch. No wonder their followers, when persecution at last came down on them, followed the example of their leaders with such readiness and resolve.

*The presence of revival profiteers.* Wherever the gospel went in those early days there were those within the revived community who sought to advance their personal interests on the coattail of the Spirit of God. Ananias and Sapphira in Jerusalem and Simon the magician in Samaria saw in the work of revival an opportunity to enhance their status and well being (Acts 5:1-11; 8:9-24). Each of these situations threatened to tarnish the revival by giving opportunity to the detractors and discouragers to lay accusations of mere self-interest at the doorstep of the believing community. This

tendency was apparently present in the church as the revival spread to Asia and Europe, for even the Apostle Paul encountered those who preached the gospel merely for the sake of selfish gain (Philippians 1:15-18). We must expect such profiteers to show up when God begins to revive his churches once again. They will pitch their tables in the courts of the Lord and offer to exchange money for any and all comers—with a reasonable profit for themselves, to be sure. They will insist on being seen as leaders of the revival, and will expect deference from all. They may even want to make certain that local media give them appropriate credit for the great work of God in their midst.

The apostles met this burden with a two-fold response. First, they exposed the profiteers to public humiliation. In each of the cases cited above, those who sought to advance their personal status were confronted publicly, before the very people they had sought to defraud, use, or mislead. Second, they pronounced judgment on the profiteers, even to the point of an extreme, but necessary (see Acts 5:12-16) example of church discipline. The leaders of the revival left no room for doubt as to how such actions were viewed by the holy God. Any who might think of taking advantage of the revival for personal gain would thus be duly warned, and would have thought twice before attempting to put something past leaders like Peter and Paul.

*The tendency toward a centripetal church.* The church in Jerusalem grew by the thousands as the Word of God increased and multiplied. They crowded into the temple and jammed into one another's homes for worship, fellowship, and instruction. The same situation arose in Antioch (Acts 11:19-23), so much so, in fact, that, when Barnabas came to assess the situation, we are told that he could *see* the grace of God in the streets, neighborhoods, and homes of the people of Antioch. Doubtless this suggests that what he saw there was not unlike what he had experienced in Jerusalem—great throngs of people gathering and increasing day by day as the Spirit of God wrought on the hearts of his chosen ones.

The danger in this is that the churches in those cities

might have become so large as to be unwieldy for effective ministry, vulnerable to persecution, or dependent on certain leaders for their identities. Any one of these might have jeopardized the mission of the churches, turning them into inwardly-focused communities more concerned with their own interests and needs than with carrying out the Lord's commission to preach the gospel to every creature. The Lord determined ingenious ways for his leaders to address this burden and lead the church to sustain its "go/tell" mission in the world.

First, from the beginning, the apostles established the churches in homes as well as in large city-wide gatherings. Those neighborhood conventicles were given the status of churches, appointed shepherds for their care, and vested with all the privileges and responsibilities of the large, city-wide assemblies (Acts 2:46; 5:42; 14:23; Romans 15:4, 5; 1 Corinthians 1:11, 16; Colossians 4:15). Thus dispersed throughout the communities, the believers met daily to reinforce their identity as the followers of Christ among their nearest neighbors, and weekly with the faithful throughout the larger community, as a strong, corporate testimony of the presence of Christ's Body. There simply were not enough Sauls of Tarsus to go house-to-house dragging the believers away to jail (Acts 8:3).

Second, the apostles led the people to a refocusing of priorities. They taught them that the earth is the Lord's and everything in it, and that it is more blessed to give than to receive (Psalm 24:1; 2 Corinthians 9:6-15). So persuasive was their preaching that no one among the revived considered their personal possessions to be their own, but freely offered all they had to meet the needs of those coming into the community of faith (Acts 4:32-35). With such a mindset it was thus relatively easy for one to accept the call to leave his worldly occupation and become a servant of the church, or even to forsake all and follow the leading of the Spirit to new communities in order to further the work of the gospel (Acts 6:1-7; 8:4). Thus new leaders and unlimited mobility were ensured. The churches did not invest the material resources of the gathered flocks for merely communal purposes and

programs. They built no buildings; took on no corporate financial obligations; and maintained no operating budgets. What came into the church in the way of offerings freely given was dispersed to meet the needs of people, local and far away (Acts 11:27-30) or to support the work of the gospel in the local community and to the ends of the earth.

Third, the apostles resolutely refused to be identified with any particular congregation as "their" church. Wherever this tendency appeared, the apostles opposed it aggressively, for they knew it could only promote personality cults, schism, and inwardness, and thus would deter the progress of the gospel (1 Corinthians 1:10-17). Peter, Paul, and the others moved frequently, and stayed in one place for only relatively short periods of time. Sometimes persecution was the motivating factor; at other times they moved on under the impulse of the Spirit, with clear commands to take the work of revival to new and distant places (Acts 13:1-3). Those who stayed longer after them—Timothy and Titus, for example—learned the lesson that the churches had only one Head, and all were expected to worship him. We can only suppose that the apostles would wince to see their names attached to so many church buildings in our own day, as they sought no memorials for themselves other than the legacy of hearts won to the Lord.

*Disruption of the status quo.* Revival is a wondrous disrupter of the status quo. When once God's Spirit begins to stir among his people, new and unforeseeable changes appear, and burden the churches to stretch and accommodate the work of the Lord in new and challenging ways.

In the church in Jerusalem two principal disruptions occurred, each the result of the ingrafting of new groups of people into the congregation. The first situation involved a disruption of economic and social practices, when the needs of Greek-speaking Hebrew widows began to be overlooked by the predominantly Aramaic-speaking Hebrew Christians (Acts 6:1-7). We are not quite sure where the Greek-speaking widows came from. Perhaps, having come to Jerusalem for Pentecost, they simply extended their stay or took up residence

in Jerusalem, where they would be more likely to “feel at home” among their new-found brothers and sisters in Christ. The Hebrew Christians were accustomed to sharing their resources with the needy, although the pouring out of the Spirit seems clearly to have provoked them to greater generosity. Did they fail to include the Greek-speaking widows out of mere presumption, thinking their own fellow countrymen would take care of their needs? Or did more subtle ethnic or economic prejudices come into play? Whatever the explanation, change was called for, and the church, under the leadership of the apostles, adjusted marvelously, and with surprising results (v. 7).

The second disruption of the status quo came with the incorporation of the Gentiles into the household of faith (Acts 10, 11). A reluctant Peter brought the good news to the Gentiles in Caesarea, astonishing himself and his colleagues, and then defended their status before the church in Jerusalem. Only in Acts 15 would this issue come to a full head, when representatives from churches throughout the community of faith would come together to determine the implications of this new development for the church as a whole and the Gentiles in particular. Both the churches and the new believers would be expected to adjust to the new realities of life together in the Body of Christ.

In each case where the disruption of the status quo had the potential to derail the reviving work of God’s Spirit, church leaders submitted to the Spirit, searched the Word of God together, stood firm for their convictions, and led the church to solidify their oneness in the Body of Christ. As God begins to revive his church in our day we can expect social, economic, and ethnic challenges to the status quo to appear in every church. Leaders will need to be fully prepared in the grace and truth of God to address these situations for the sake of the gospel.

*The need for renewed vision.* How easy it must be, as revival comes, for churches to rest in what God is doing, pleased to see the influx of new members and satisfied that they are blessed and loved of the Lord. How wrong it would be to let

local revival to become an end in itself. Revival is a process. What God begins in one place he intends to carry on elsewhere, as the church in Antioch came to understand.

The church grew rapidly in this Syrian city, so rapidly that it required a number of able teachers to keep up with the demand of public and house-to-house instruction (Acts 13:1-3). But God did not intend the revival to end in Antioch; rather, this church was to become the jumping-off place for the next great expansion of the gospel. As the leaders gathered in prayer and fasting, they looked to the Lord and waited on him to lead them. He obliged by enlarging their vision, selecting two of their most capable leaders, and, with the blessing of the church as a whole, sending them off to initiate the first world missions outreach in church history. What if those leaders had not been willing to let their vision grow? If they had resolved to hold on to Saul and Barnabas, under the claim that what God was doing in Antioch required their continuing presence? Revived churches need to review their vision and prepare to make whatever sacrifices the Lord may be requiring of them, lest the blessings they experience be turned to bane as the Lord disciplines their lack of faith and obedience.

*Theological error.* By Acts 15 theological error has begun to intrude into the revival. Judaizers were insisting that there could be no salvation apart from submission to the religious laws of Israel, beginning with circumcision. Paul and Peter argued and Paul wrote (Galatians) against this heretical development, and they faced off with the perpetrators in a public debate before the gatekeepers of God’s household. As they searched the Scriptures and stood firm on what they found there, God led them to a conclusion that brought joy and rejoicing to the Gentile Christians and complete satisfaction to all but the heretics. Then the apostles anathematized from the Body of Christ (Galatians 1:8, 9). The conclusions of the (so-called) Jerusalem council were published to all the churches, with the result that the reviving work of God’s Spirit continued even greater than before.

These are six ways that church leaders can expect to be



burdened with situations that have the potential to sidetrack the work of revival in their churches. Responsible leaders will prepare themselves now, even as they assault the throne of grace for revival, so that they might be able to address these burdens effectively as they arise.

#### PRESERVING THE BLESSING, AVOIDING THE BANE

Let me make a few suggestions about how church leaders can begin to prepare for such burdens, so that, when they appear, the church can move swiftly and effectively to address them.

Teach the people of God what to expect when revival comes, including the burdens they can be expected to bear. Encourage them eagerly to seek the blessings of revival, and to see the burdens as opportunities to trust the Lord for even greater advance.

Nurture the practice of praying together, in large groups and small, so that, as these burdens arise, it will be possible to enlist large numbers of God's people to join in prayer for their resolution.

Keep an eye on the theological horizon, to see what false teachings may be starting to emerge. You can be sure, once revival comes, that these will want a piece of the action. By learning about them now church leaders will be in a better position to deal with them when they arise to threaten the progress of the gospel.

Review your church's vision statement to determine whether it is sufficiently clear and expansive to accommodate a sudden movement of God's Spirit in revival. If not, begin working to change it now. When the Spirit does begin to stir, he will have just that much more room in the hearts and minds of God's people for whatever he may want to do.

Teach your people, if you have not already, to give thanks in everything, for every situation. If they can learn to give thanks always and in everything now, they will be less prone to complaint and blame-laying when the burdens of revival appear, and more likely to turn first and always to the Lord.

Train all your leaders, and all future ones, with a mindset

for revival: what it is, how it comes, what to expect when it appears, and what will be required of church leaders to ensure that revival continues according to the good pleasure of the Lord.

If church leaders can begin taking these steps now they will both signal to the Lord their confident expectation that he will revive his church, and they will prepare themselves and their people for steady progress of revival when once the Spirit begins to move in their midst again.

The blessings of revival are wonderful. They are why we pray, study, preach, teach, and encourage one another to continue seeking the Lord for a fresh season of renewal in his churches. But with the blessings come also clear and potentially difficult burdens. If we are not prepared for these we may fail to address them adequately, to the detriment of the revival and of the Body of Christ. But a little foresight and some diligent preparation can help to ensure that the burdens of revival will not become its bane, and that the blessings God earnestly desires for his people will continue and increase to the praise of his glorious grace.

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